

## **ParticipACTION releases the 2022 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth**

*Kids get a “D” for overall physical activity as new research highlights pandemic-related challenges and opportunities*

**TORONTO, October 4, 2022 /CNW/** — Today ParticipACTION released the 2022 Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, Canada’s most comprehensive assessment of child and youth physical activity. This is the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the Report Card, containing grades based on data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic to better assess the impact that this historic public health threat has had on kids’ movement behaviours.

When the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, there was a sudden and drastic shift in the ways kids could access physical activity opportunities. Playing with friends, in-person physical education classes, sport competitions and recreation programming came to a halt. Most families understood the urgent need for public health measures, but there was also a realization that many kids were suddenly deprived of essential opportunities to grow strong, develop skills and connect with peers through sport and physical activity. **This year’s “D” grade in overall physical activity is a decrease from the 2020 Report Card and reflects a substantial drop in kids’ movement.**

COVID-19 also elevated sedentary screen use into a position of increased prominence and dependence. Only 18% of children and youth meet the Canadian 24-Hour Movement recommendations of no more than 2 hours per day of recreational screen time. The pivot to virtual learning and calls to stay at home transformed kids’ screens from an indulgence into a necessity for education and a default for leisure-time behaviour creating even greater concerns for the many ways that screen time adversely impacts healthy movement behaviours and overall well-being. This is highlighted **in the “F” grade for screen time, a significant decrease from a “D+” in 2020.**

“There is no doubt that many opportunities for physical activity were lost due to necessary public health measures,” says Dr. Mark Tremblay, Chief Scientific Officer, ParticipACTION Report Card, and Senior Scientist with the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group, CHEO Research Institute.

“Restricted access to schools and opportunities for sports and recreation contributed to a national decrease in children’s and youth’s physical activity and an increase in sedentary behaviours. However, we also saw sparks of inspiration and opportunities for a new normal, with some kids showing positive outcomes throughout the pandemic, especially when you look at active transportation and active play.”

Throughout the country, many families, communities and organizations worked hard to provide active opportunities for kids. Car-free urban spaces, rural trails and paths, and open-air markets allowed families and kids to walk, roll and ride more, leading to an increase in this year’s active transportation grade. Parks, trails and other outdoor spaces became popular outlets for family entertainment and exercise, providing a much-needed boost to kids’ mental and physical health. This dedication, perseverance and creativity meant that this year’s **grade for household support for physical activity remained a “C”, active transportation increased to a “C-” and active play improved from an “F” to a “D-”, a remarkable feat considering the strain many families experienced during the peak of the pandemic.**

Unfortunately, many physical activity opportunities were not experienced in an equitable way. For example, car-free street spaces were generally allocated in areas with fewer visible minority populations and fewer households with children; moreover, increases in outdoor time were more likely for children in higher-income families. In order to emphasize the importance of physical activity for equity-deserving groups, the 2022 Report Card features key findings specific to children and youth with disabilities, girls as well as Indigenous, 2SLGBTQ+, newcomer, and racialized children and youth.

“We hope this report will serve as a catalyst for heightened awareness on the importance of measuring, promoting and understanding physical activity for equity-deserving children and youth,” says Elio Antunes, President and CEO of ParticipACTION. “Improving physical activity for equity-deserving groups will help increase physical activity for all children and youth, which is key to protecting the health and well-being of all throughout the pandemic and in the future.”

### **About ParticipACTION**

ParticipACTION is a national non-profit charitable organization that inspires and supports Canadians to make physical activity a vital part of their everyday life. As Canada’s leading physical activity brand, ParticipACTION works with its partners, which include organizations in the sport, physical activity and recreation sectors, alongside government and corporate sponsors, to help Canadians reduce sedentary time and move more through innovative engagement initiatives and thought leadership. ParticipACTION is generously supported by the Government of Canada. Learn how ParticipACTION has been moving Canadians for over 50 years at [ParticipACTION.com](https://www.participaction.com) and download the free [ParticipACTION app](#) to access a fun, evidence-informed tool that empowers you on your physical activity journey.

### **About the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth**

Led by a team of leading Canadian researchers and stakeholders in the field of children and youth physical activity and sport, the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth represents a comprehensive synthesis of the literature and related national-level surveys. The Report Card assigns letter grades to 14 different indicators grouped into four categories: Daily Behaviours; Individual Characteristics; Spaces & Places; and Strategies & Investments. ParticipACTION relies on its strategic partner, the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the CHEO Research Institute (HALO-CHEO), and members of the Report Card Research Committee, to research, develop and communicate the Report Card.

The ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth and the ParticipACTION Report Card on Physical Activity for Adults create a family of Report Cards that are, together, the most comprehensive assessment of physical activity in Canada. The reports work to prompt new research and investments, identify recommendations for improvement as well as influence programs and policies.

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